



## **BABYCAL FACT SHEET**

### **WHAT IS BABYCAL?**

BabyCal is a statewide public awareness and education campaign aimed at combating low birthweight and decreasing infant mortality. BabyCal focuses on educating women and their families about the importance of prenatal care, practicing healthy behaviors during pregnancy and the availability of state programs that can help pay for prenatal care services. BabyCal, administered by the California Department of Health Services (DHS), was launched in 1991.

### **WHAT ARE BABYCAL'S KEY MESSAGES?**

The key messages of the BabyCal Campaign are:

1. get early and ongoing prenatal care;
2. practice healthy behaviors throughout pregnancy (no smoking, drinking or drugs); and
3. California has programs that can help expectant mothers.

### **WHO DOES THE BABYCAL CAMPAIGN TARGET?**

BabyCal is designed to target high-risk women throughout the state of California, including African-American women, younger women and low-income women of all ethnicities.

### **WHAT IS LOW BIRTHWEIGHT?**

Low birthweight (less than 5.5 lbs.) is the factor most associated with infant mortality. Low birthweight babies are 40 times more likely to die in their first year than healthy babies. Low birthweight babies who survive are more vulnerable to serious health and developmental problems, such as blindness, deafness, mental retardation, and learning disabilities. Key factors in low birthweight include a lack of or inadequate prenatal care, and the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs during pregnancy.

### **WHY DO WE NEED BABYCAL?**

Care for low birthweight babies in neonatal intensive care units can cost up to \$3,000 per day. Considering that the state spends more than \$300 million annually in Medi-Cal costs for neonatal intensive care, efforts to educate expectant women about the importance of prenatal care and practicing a healthy lifestyle are well worth the investment.

### **HOW DOES BABYCAL WORK?**

Through social marketing, including advertising, community outreach, public relations, sponsorships and a toll-free information line, the California Department of Health Services has demonstrated that large numbers of women can be reached and motivated to seek early and ongoing prenatal care, and to seek information about state programs that can assist them, such as Medi-Cal and Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM).

**Advertising:** Extensive research is conducted in developing the BabyCal Campaign advertising, including using focus groups composed of pregnant women of various ages and ethnicities. Paid advertising is broadcast on television in English and Spanish, and radio ads in English. Ethnic print ads that feature the BabyCal messages are placed in targeted Asian and African-American communities.

**Community Outreach:** In addition to advertising, BabyCal's messages are delivered to pregnant women through a statewide network of community-based organizations (CBOs). BabyCal brochures and posters are provided in English, Spanish and four Asian languages to assist CBOs in reaching the target audience. The CBO Network currently includes 550 CBOs that bring BabyCal's vital messages to the target population.

**Sponsorship:** BabyCal also works with corporate and public agencies to support delivery of vital prenatal care messages to the public. Corporate sponsors have included 99 Cents Only Stores, Babies "R" Us, Baby Talk Magazine, Bay Area Rapid Transit, Beech Nut Corporation, the California Department of Motor Vehicles, DHS Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition program, Dole, General Mills, Longs Drugs, Mattel, McDonald's, Raley's and Bel Air, The Vons Companies Inc., and the WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks and Sacramento Monarchs.

**Public Relations:** BabyCal's public relations program focuses on hosting special events in communities throughout the state to inform the public and news media about BabyCal's vital messages.

**Celebrity Spokespersons:** Holly Robinson Peete, star of the television series "For Your Love," became a spokesperson for the BabyCal Campaign in April 2000 to increase public awareness about the importance of seeing a doctor early and regularly, eating right and staying away from smoking, drinking and drugs during pregnancy. Holly is featured in a series of television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) that were launched in February 2001. Her image also appears on a BabyCal mini-poster and pocket calendar.

Actress Jada Pinkett Smith ("The Nutty Professor," "Set It Off," and "A Different World") joined the BabyCal Campaign in 1999 to raise public awareness about the importance of prenatal care and practicing healthy behaviors during pregnancy. Jada is featured in a series of television PSAs, as well as on several outreach materials.

Actress Mo'Nique, from the United Paramount Network (UPN) hit sitcom, "The Parkers," is featured in a television PSA that aired on UPN. Mo'Nique also narrated a 30-minute television special, "Baby Love," which focused on prenatal care, reducing the incidence of low birthweight and decreasing infant mortality. "Baby Love" aired on UPN/KCOP in Los Angeles in December 2000.

**Toll-Free Telephone Number:** BabyCal offers a toll-free telephone information service (**1-800-BABY-999**) that women can call for information about prenatal care and programs that can help expectant mothers. More than 500,000 calls have been received by the toll-free line number since 1991. An average of 3,700 calls are received each month. All BabyCal Campaign educational materials display the toll-free number.

**Media Partnerships:** BabyCal entered into a year-long partnership with two United Paramount Network (UPN) affiliates – KCOP 13 in Los Angeles and KMAX 31 in Sacramento – to connect with harder-to-reach women and families in these large metropolitan areas. BabyCal chose UPN because of their proven track record in attracting African-American women, a group that has the highest rate of infant mortality and low birthweight in California. The partnership generated more than 200 million impressions in the Los Angeles area and featured 17 community-based partners. Activities included a 10-second PSA featuring Mo'Nique, star of UPN's hit sitcom, "The Parkers;" "Baby Love," a compelling half-hour television special on prenatal care narrated by Mo'Nique; 13 news features; and a special link on the station's Web site. After the success with UPN, BabyCal joined forces with Univision affiliate KFTV 21 in Fresno to reach the Central Valley's large Spanish-speaking population. In addition to producing and airing a PSA with one of its top on-air personalities, Univision aired seven news features focusing on prenatal care.

**Web Site ([www.dhs.ca.gov/babycal](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/babycal)):** Designed for CBOs, the BabyCal Web site provides the opportunity to obtain a variety of BabyCal information, including BabyCal's quarterly newsletter, *BabyCal News*, prenatal care fact sheets and upcoming prenatal care-related events occurring in California. The Web site also includes a section that provides media information.